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McNamara papers

Travel briefings France, etc.  
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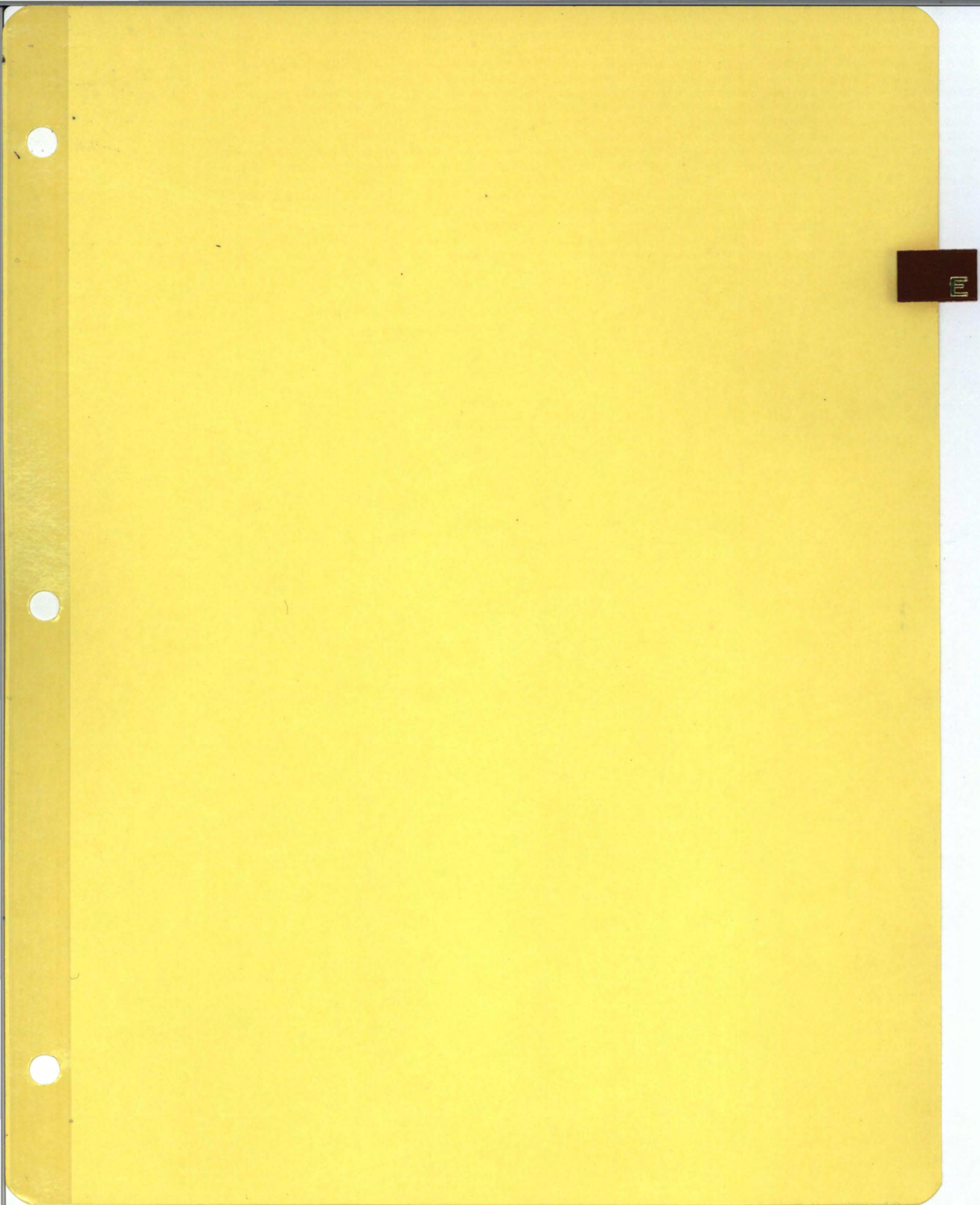
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Population Problems in Western Africa  
With Particular Reference to Senegal, Ivory Coast and Cameroon

General Background

1. This note gives some indication of the seriousness of population pressures and of the various approaches to the population problem that may be feasible.
2. At the outset the deficiencies in demographic data over most of Africa should be emphasized. There have been few complete population censuses, and many of the partial or sample censuses have not been very accurate or adequate in terms of the detailed information that it would be desirable to obtain. Intercensal comparisons are generally difficult to make owing to differences in coverage and reliability. Registration of births and deaths is in many respects incomplete or for some areas wholly lacking. The question therefore arises whether the Bank should not encourage, and even provide or facilitate financing for, the collection of demographic information that would permit a more accurate assessment of the nature and seriousness of the population problem.
3. The average rate of natural increase in the population of Western Africa has been estimated at somewhat over 2 percent annually (perhaps about 2.3 percent). This should not conceal, however, the potentialities for a much more rapid rise over the next decade. Crude birth rates in most Western African countries are believed to be among the highest in the world - as high as 50 to 60 per 1,000. Death rates are also very high and since experience in other countries show that death rates tend to decline more rapidly than birth rates, a considerable acceleration in the rate of population growth may be anticipated. It has been estimated, for example, that a reduction in currently high infant mortality rates - say, from 200 to 100 per thousand - would alone raise the natural rate of increase by one-half of one percent.
4. At the same time it should be noted that Western Africa as a whole cannot now or for the discernible future be considered "overpopulated," i.e. characterized by excess populations in relation to potential availability and utilization of resources. For the most part, for example, there is no population pressure on land. Available land is therefore being utilized extensively, and much greater output per unit of area can generally be achieved with more intensive exploitation of land as the population increases. There are, however, pronounced variations in population density. Some of these variations relate to natural differences in the potentialities of land or to the location of certain areas in relation to economic opportunities. Other variations may be the result of historical factors such as intertribal wars which have sometimes greatly affected the amount of land available to each tribe. Thus in certain areas population pressure is already becoming excessive. Instances in point are the central region of Upper Volta, Eastern Nigeria (Biafra), Northern Togo, and the southern part of Dahomey where half the country's population is crowded on ten percent of the area.
5. There is substantial temporary and even permanent labor migration across frontiers and even within countries. In Western Africa this has taken the form of movements from the poorer Sahelian and Soudanian ecological zones to the richer Guinean and Guinean equatorial ecological zones. There is also, of course, a pronounced trend toward urbanization, and the rate of migration to the cities has generally exceeded the increase in employment opportunities in the urban areas.

### Possible Approaches

6. Various approaches to the population problem and its manifestations are feasible and desirable, depending on the circumstances. In general the Bank should encourage an increasing awareness by African governments of the population problem and its implications. At the same time the Bank should recognize that family limitation is only one of various possible approaches and should be aware of resistance which family limitation may encounter. Some of the possible approaches may be briefly considered:

a) Family limitation - Apparently there are as yet no officially sponsored family limitation programs in any of the Western African countries. Given the considerable potentialities for the further development of Africa's natural and human resources, family limitation may not always have a very high priority. Where areas of excessive population pressure exist, programs for family limitation may be indicated, but even there certain possible obstacles must be taken into account. Since population pressures may vary greatly as between tribes, there is a danger that population limitation programs may be interpreted as being directed primarily at certain tribes and may accordingly aggravate intertribal tensions. For example, an official birth control program in Nigeria would probably be regarded by the Ibos as a measure directed against them. It should also be noted that in rural areas children are also regarded as economic assets. In African agriculture there are often pronounced labor peaks which cannot at present be surmounted except with the help of children. Also, in the absence of systems of social security, people tend to favor the maintenance of a high birth rate in order to secure the survival of enough male children to support them in their old age.

b) Urbanization - Measures to arrest the rate of urbanization are important. The Bank can contribute to these by emphasizing rural development projects which would not only step up agricultural and livestock output but also improve the amenities and attractiveness of rural life. More attention must also be given to the adaptation of education to the requirements of the rural areas and to the production of foodstuffs for the growing urban population. To the extent that further urbanization is inevitable, measures are also needed to promote better town planning and to meet urgent problems of infrastructure, including water supply and sewerage.

c) Resettlement - It has already been noted that spontaneous migration has to some extent provided a safety valve for countries and areas which have a dense population in relation to resources. For instance, Upper Volta, which is a very poor country, "exports" a not insignificant part of its population to the richer countries of West Africa such as the Ivory Coast and enjoys the benefit of "emigrant" remittances. To some extent it may be possible to encourage such migration, particularly within countries, by resettlement schemes, although experience demonstrates that such schemes have in the past often been unduly expensive.

d) Development priorities for densely populated areas - Since the possibilities of migration and resettlement are limited, development must usually be "brought" to areas which actually or potentially suffer from excessive population in relation to current resource utilization. It is noteworthy that the Hinvi oil palm (and associated food crop) project which we have recently undertaken to finance in Dahomey will provide greater employment and income opportunities in that part of the country which experiences the greatest population pressure. Both governments and the Bank should therefore be attentive to the

location of projects in relation to actual and emerging population problems. | Similarly, in densely populated areas where unemployment is a problem, the objective of projects should be not simply to raise output but, above all, to create employment opportunities.

### Country Notes

#### Senegal

7. A sample census in 1960/61 indicated a total population of 3,110,000 of which 72 percent lived in villages of less than 5,000 inhabitants and 12 percent in the capital, Dakar. According to the census the birth rate was 43 per thousand, and the death rate 16 per thousand. Since, however, the death rate appears to be clearly underestimated, it is probable that the natural annual rate of increase is in the range of 2.2 - 2.5 percent. This rate may well rise rather rapidly in the future in view of the possibilities of a decline in the death rate and particularly of the child mortality rate which for children up to the age of 5 apparently ranges between 40 percent and 50 percent.

*discuss with Min*

8. Population density, however, is still quite low and up to the present there cannot be said to be a very acute problem. At the same time top officials of the government are increasingly aware that in the future a rising rate of population growth may jeopardize the target of tripling per capita incomes by the year 2000. As yet the Government has sponsored no family planning programs.

9. Like most African countries, Senegal does have a problem arising out of the uneven distribution of population. For historic, political and health reasons, the southeastern part of the country, which enjoys the best rainfall and has good soils, is only sparsely populated (six persons per square mile) whereas in the center of the traditional groundnut-producing area land is scarce and the population density exceeds 130 per square mile. This situation has given rise to a continuous migration - in part spontaneous and in part organized by religious leaders ("marabouts") - of farmers from the overpopulated center and the dry north to the south and southeast. The Government has begun to study a project to increase this migration and to use it as a vehicle for introducing modern agricultural techniques and agricultural diversification. A preliminary report on this project (called "Terres Neuves" - New Lands) has recently been submitted to the Bank for consideration and is being studied by the Agricultural Projects Department.

*discuss with Min*

*discuss with Min*

#### Ivory Coast

10. The Ivory Coast is comparatively rich in natural resources, particularly in the fields of agriculture and forestry, and in the past its indigenous population may in fact be said to have been insufficient for the rapid development of these resources. The rapid expansion in the production of coffee and cocoa production over recent decades owes much to the availability of immigrant labor from Upper Volta and Mali. The resident population of 4.5 million in 1966 included about 400,000 to 500,000 immigrants from these two countries. This raised the annual rate of increase in the total population to between 3 and 3.5 percent even though the natural rate of increase is estimated at only 2 to 2.5 percent.

11. As in other African countries the birth rate is high, the population is young, and the rate of population increases is bound to accelerate with declines in the high death rate. However, because of the resource potential of the country, it is likely that such an increase can be reconciled with a

continued rise in per capita incomes. Income disparities and differences in population pressure within the country are to some extent relieved by population movements from the less-favored north toward the "forest" area in the south where conditions are more conducive to development. The Government is now seeking to promote movement toward certain "chosen" development areas such as the San Pedro region of the southwest, but appears to be underestimating the cost of organized settlement and development of such areas.

#### Cameroon

12. For this country demographic data are particularly inadequate. The Government expects to conduct the first country-wide census in 1970, and the improvement of vital statistics is being studied with the help of the French. Currently the population is estimated at 5.4 million and is believed to be growing at an annual rate of 2.1 percent. Prospects for reducing the death rate, conservatively put at 26 per 1,000, point to the possibility that the rate of growth could accelerate rather quickly.

13. While the implications of more rapid population growth should undoubtedly be studied, the average population density of around 11.5 per square kilometer cannot be considered high, particularly since the country has better than average agricultural potential by African standards. However, as is often the case elsewhere, there are areas of population pressure, such as the highlands inhabited by the Bamelike tribe, where population density reaches 106 per square kilometer. However, the highlands have the most fertile land and there are possibilities of creating additional employment and income opportunities there such as the cultivation tea, a project that is now being elaborated for eventual Bank financing.

John C. de Wilde  
Western Africa Department  
January 17, 1969

JCW:eob

## OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Robert S. McNamara

DATE: January 18, 1969

FROM: Franz Lutolf *FL*SUBJECT: Western Africa: FAC - Financed Preinvestment Studies

You have requested a list of preinvestment studies in Western Africa financed by FAC and relating to projects which the Abidjan Office has identified. The list is attached.

The following comments are of interest:

- 1) The 14 ongoing studies (in 8 countries) are the only ones we have asked for so far. In other words, none of our requests has been turned down.
- 2) FAC moves fast. There is usually a delay of no more than a few weeks from the moment Paris receives the request until field work commences.
- 3) In most cases, FAC has asked the Abidjan Office to prepare the terms of reference for the studies. Where this was not the case, we were always given an opportunity to comment on FAC's first draft.
- 4) The studies are in essence supervised by the staff of the Abidjan Office. Hence, we have ample opportunity to make the Bank's requirements known.
- 5) We expect to submit a series of further studies to FAC in the near future.

✓ review  
in  
Abidjan

Attachment

FLutolf:ptv

cc: Messrs. Knapp  
Aldewereld  
Chaufournier



WESTERN AFRICA: PREINVESTMENT STUDIES FINANCED BY FAC

<u>Country</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Nature of Study</u>
Cameroon	Rice Tea	Feasibility Study Feasibility Study
Central African Republic	Livestock Cotton	Project Outline Feasibility Study
Congo (Brazzaville)	Livestock	Feasibility Study
Dahomey	Cotton Fisheries (Lagoon)	Feasibility Study Technical Study
Ivory Coast	Cotton	Financial Analysis
Senegal	Rice	Analysis of ongoing and outline of prospective projects
Togo	Cotton Irrigation Cocoa	Reconnaissance Study Reconnaissance Study Feasibility Study
Upper Volta	Cotton Roads	Feasibility Study Pre-Feasibility Study

FLutolf:ptv  
Western Africa Department  
January 18, 1969